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BI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE

Settlement of Germantown, Pa.,


AND THE BEGINNING OF

GERMAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA.

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AN ADDRESS

AT THE BI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE

Settlement of Germantown, Pa.,

AND THE BEGINNING OF

GERMAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA,

BY

SAMUEL W. PENNYPACKER,

IN THE PHILADELPHIA ACADEMY OF MUSIC,

ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 6TH, 1883.

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1883.

PENNYPACKER & ROGERS, 1018 CHESTNUT ST.

974.811  
P385a

## ADDRESS.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

*Don't forget*

The Teutonic races since the overthrow of the power of ancient Rome, which they brought about, have been in the van of thought and achievement. The only rivals of the German and the Dutchman, in those things which mark broadly the pathway of human advancement, came from the same household. In the sixth century a tribe of Germans found their way across the North Sea to an island which in time they made their own, and to which they gave the name of Angleland. Like all of their stock, the men of this colony grew in substance and developed in intelligence, but they have ever since, in times of trial and difficulty, looked back to the Fatherland for guidance and support. In 1471 a man named Caxton was in Cologne learning the art of printing. He returned to England to impart to his countrymen a knowledge of the new discovery, and the literature of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Scott and Dickens became a possibility. The impulse which Martin Luther gave to human thought, when he nailed his propositions to the church door at Wittenberg, beat along the shores of the Atlantic, and the revolution of 1688, bringing with it the liberty of English-

men, was one of the results. For the attainment of that liberty England drove her own royal line beyond the seas and made the Stadtholder of Holland her king. From his day down to the present time every king of England has been a German.

Early in the seventeenth century an English admiral went to Rotterdam for a wife. According to Pepys, who described her later, she was "a well-looking, fat, short old Dutch woman, but one that hath been heretofore pretty handsome, and, I believe, hath more wit than her husband." The son of this woman was the Quaker, William Penn. He who would know the causes for the settlement of Pennsylvania, the purest, and in that it gave the best promise of what the future was to unfold, the most fateful of the American colonies, must go to the Reformation to seek them. The time has come when men look back through William Penn and George Fox to their masters, Menno Simons, the reformer of the Netherlands, Caspar Schwenckfeld, the nobleman of Silesia, and Jacob Boehm, the inspired shoemaker of Görlitz. In that great upheaval of the sixteenth century, there were leaders who refused to stop where Luther, Calvin and Zuinglius took a successful stand. The strong, controlling thought which underlay their teachings was that there should be no exercise of force in religion. The baptism of an infant was a compulsory method of bringing it into the Church, and they rejected the doctrine. An oath was a means of compelling the conscience, and they



refused to swear. Warfare was a violent interference with the rights of others, and they would take part in no wars even for the purposes of self-protection. More than all in its political significance and effect, with keen insight and clear view, hoping for themselves what the centuries since have given to us, they for the first time taught that the injunctions of Christ were one thing and the power of man another, that the might of the state should have nothing to do with the creed of the church, and that every man in matters of faith should be left to his own convictions. Their doctrines, mingled as must be admitted with some delusions, spread like wild-fire throughout Europe, and their followers could be found from the mountains of Switzerland to the dikes of Holland. They were the forlorn hope of the ages, and, coming into direct conflict with the interests of church and state, they were crushed by the concentrated power of both.

There is nothing in the history of Christendom like the suffering to which they were subjected, in respect to its extent and severity. The fumes from their burning bodies went up into the air from every city and village along the Rhine. The stories of their lives were told by their enemies, and the pages of history were freighted with the records of their alleged misdeeds. The name of Anabaptist, which was given them, was made a byword and reproach, and we shrink from it with a sense of only half-forgotten terror even to-day. The English representatives of this move-

ment were the Quakers. Picart, after telling that some of the Anabaptists fled to England to spread their doctrines there, says: "The Quakers owe their rise to these Anabaptists." The doctrine of the inner light was an assertion that every man has within himself a test of truth upon which he may rely, and was in itself an attack upon the binding character of authority. The seed from the sowings of Menno, wafted across from the Rhine to the Thames, were planted on English soil by George Fox, and were brought by William Penn to Pennsylvania, where no man has ever been molested because of his religious convictions. Three times did William Penn, impelled by a sympathetic nearness of faith and methods, go over to Holland and Germany to hold friendly converse and discussion with these people, and it was very fitting that when he had established his province in the wilds of America he should urge and prevail with them to cross the ocean to him.

On this day, two hundred years ago, thirty-three of them, men, women and children, landed in Philadelphia. The settlement of Germantown has a higher import, then, than that thirteen families founded new homes, and that a new burgh, destined to fame though it was, was builded on the face of the earth. It has a wider significance, even, than that here was the beginning of that immense emigration of Germans

1. Picart was here cited because he makes the statement directly and in few words. Upon this subject consult Barclay's *Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, Hortensius' *Histoire des Anabaptistes*, and Penna. *Magazine*, Vol. iv, page 4.

who have since flocked to these shores. Those thirteen men, humble as they may have been individually, and unimportant as may have been the personal events of their lives, holding as they did opinions which were banned in Europe, and which only the fullness of time could justify, standing as they did on what was then the outer picket line of civilization, best represented the meaning of the colonization of Pennsylvania and the principles which lie at the foundation of her institutions. Better far than the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, better even than the Quakers who established a city of brotherly love, they stood for that spirit of universal toleration which found no abiding place save in America. Their feet were planted directly upon that path which leads from the darkness of the middle ages down to the light of the nineteenth century, from the oppressions of the past to the freedom of the present. Bullinger, the great reviler of the Anabaptists, in detailing in 1560 their many heresies, says they taught that "the government shall and may not assume control of questions of religion or faith."<sup>2</sup> No such attack upon the established order of things had ever been made before, and the potentates were wild in their wrath. Menno went from place to place with a reward upon his head, men were put to death for giving him shelter, and two hundred and twenty-nine of his followers were burned and be-

2. "Die Oberkeit soelle vnd moege sich der Religion oder Gloubens sachen niht annemen." Der Widertoufferen Vrsprung. p 18.

headed in one city alone. But, two centuries after Bullinger wrote, there was put into the constitution of Pennsylvania, in almost identical language: "No human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the right of conscience." The fruitage is here, but the planting and watering were along the Rhine. And to-day the Mennonites and their descendants are to be found from the Delaware River to the Columbia. The Schwenckfelders, hunted out of Europe in 1734, still meet upon the Skippack on the 24th of every September, to give thanks unto the Lord for their deliverance. This is the tale which Lensen, Kunders, Lucken, Tyson, Opdengraeff and the rest, as they sat down to weave their cloth and tend their vines in the woods of Germantown, had to tell to the world. A great poet has sung their story, and you Germans will do well to keep the memory of it green for all time to come.

It cannot be gainsaid that the influence upon American life and institutions of that German emigration which began with thirty-three persons in 1683 and had swollen in 1882 to 250,630, has fulfilled the promise given by its auspicious commencement. The Quakers maintained control of their province down to the time of the Revolution, and they were enabled to do it by the support of the Germans. The dread with which the Germans inspired the politicians of the colonial days was excessive. In 1727 James Logan wrote to the proprietary: "You will soon have a German colony here, and, perhaps, such a one as

Britain once received from Saxony in ye fifth century.” Said Thomas Graeme to Thomas Penn in a letter in 1750, “The Dutch, by their numbers and industry, will soon become masters of the province.” Many were the devices to weaken them. It was proposed to establish schools among them where only English should be taught, to invalidate all German deeds, to suppress all German printing presses and the importation of German books, and to offer rewards for intermarriages. Samuel Purviance wrote to Colonel James Burd in 1765 that the way to do was “to let it be spread abroad through the country that your party intend to come well-armed to the election, \* \* \* and that you will thrash the sheriff, every inspector, Quaker and mennonist to a jelly.” But as a disappointed manager wrote from Kingsessing the same year; “all in vain was our labor. \* \* \* Our party at the last election have loosed all.”

The speaker of the first federal House of Representatives was a German, and with Simon Snyder, in 1808, began the regime of the eight German governors of Pennsylvania. To represent her military renown during the Revolutionary War, Pennsylvania has put the statue of Muhlenberg in the capitol at Washington. The terrific and bloody struggle with slavery in this country, which ended at Appomattox in 1865, began at Germantown so long ago as 1688. The Murat of the Rebellion, he who afterwards so sadly lost his life among the savages of the west, had traced his lineage



to the Mennonite, Paul Kuster, of Germantown, and if the records were accessible, it could, it may be, be carried still further back to that Peter Kuster who was beheaded at Saardam, in 1535. Another of the descendants of those earliest emigrants, the youngest general of the war, planted his victorious flag upon the ramparts of Fort Fisher. The Schwenckfelder forefathers of Hartranft, major-general, governor, and once urged by this State for the presidency, lie buried along the Perkiomen. He who reads the annals of the war will find that among those who did the most effective work were Albright, Beaver, Dahlgren, Heintzleman, Hoffman, Rosecrans, Steinwehr, Schurz, Sigel, Weitzel and Wistar.

The liberties of the press in America were established in the trial of John Peter Zenger. Man never knew the distance of the sun and stars until David Rittenhouse, of Germantown, made his observations in 1769.<sup>3</sup> The oldest publishing house now existing on this continent was started by Sauer, in Germantown, in 1738. The first paper mill was built by Rittinghuysen upon the Wissahickon Creek, in 1690.<sup>4</sup> The German Bible antedates the English Bible in America by nearly forty years, and the largest book published in the colonies came from the Ephrata press in 1749. From Pastorius, the enthusiast, of highest culture and gentlest blood, down to Seidensticker, who made

3. He was born in Roxborough Township near Germantown.

4. It was on a branch of the Wissahickon.

him known to us, the Germans have been conspicuous for learning. To the labors of the Moravian missionaries, Zeisberger and Heckewelder, we largely owe what knowledge we possess of Indian history and philology. Samuel Cunard, a descendant of Thones Kunders in the fifth generation, established the first line of ocean steamers between America and England and was made a British Baronet.

If you would see the work of the American Germans of to-day look about you. Is there a scientist of more extended reputation than Leidy? Is there a more eminent surgeon than Gross? Who designed your Centennial buildings, and in whose hands did you trust the moneys to pay for them? The president of your University, the most enterprising of American merchants, and the chief justice of your State are alike of German descent. The great bridge just completed after years of labor and immense expenditures, which ties Brooklyn to New York, was built by a German. The financier of the nation during the Rebellion undertook to construct a railroad from the greatest of the inland seas to the widest of the oceans. He fell beneath the weight of the task. A German completed it.

But the time allotted to me does not permit me to more than suggest a few points in the broad outlines of German achievement. The hammer of Thor, which, at the dawn of history, smote upon the Himalayas, now resounds from the Alleghenies to the Cascades.

The Germanic tide, which then began to pour into Europe, has now reached the Pacific. In its great march, covering twenty centuries of time, it has met with no obstacle which it has not overcome, it has been opposed by no force which it has not overthrown, and it has entered no field which it has not made more fruitful. America will have no different story to tell. The future cannot belie the past. Manners and institutions change, the rock crumbles into dust, the shore disappears into the sea, but there is nothing more permanent than the characteristics of a race. Already the rigidity and angularity which Puritanism has impressed upon this country have begun to disappear; already we feel the results of a broader scope, a sterner purpose and of more persistent labor. And in the years yet to be, America will have greater gifts to offer unto the generations of men, will be better able to attain that destiny which, in the providence of God, she is to fulfill, because she has taken unto herself the outpourings of that people which neither the legions of Cæsar, nor papal power, nor the genius of a Bonaparte were able to subdue.







